

NEW JERSEY

2000-2001

Guidelines and
Application

BEST

PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 27, 2000

The Best Practices application is a public document. The information that you provide will serve as the official record. Review the application prior to submission to ensure accuracy and adherence to the guidelines. Type or keyboard information requested on this page and page 2, if applicable.

Category Assessment/Evaluation (Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name Senior Projects/Senior Alternate Assessment Program
Number of Schools with Practice 2 (If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	Bergen		
District (Proper Name)	Pascack Valley Regional High School District		
Address	46 Akers Avenue		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	Montvale	NJ	07645
	City		Zip Code
Telephone	358-7006	Fax 505-4858	Email
Chief School Administrator	Dr. Benedict Tantillo		
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	Pascack Valley High School		
Address	200 Piermont Avenue		
	Street/P. O. Box		
	City	Hillsdale	NJ 07642 Zip Code
Telephone	358-7060	Fax 358-7102	Email
Principal	Dr. Barbara Sapienza		
Program Developer(s)	Mrs. Janice Cooper and Mr. Thomas Conroy		
Application Prepared By	Mrs. Janice Cooper and Mr. Thomas Conroy		
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<i>Benedict Tantillo</i>		

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature*Jason R. Graham*

**NEW JERSEY
BEST PRACTICES
2000-2001 APPLICATION**

Application Requirements: Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.

1. **RESPONSES** to the information and the statements below must be **ANONYMOUS** and **ACCURATE**. No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements
2. **USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM** on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
3. Application must be **keyboarded on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font** must be used. (This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.)
4. **KEYBOARDED RESPONSES** to all the statements below must be **no more than a total of four pages**. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for accuracy and clarity.
5. The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on **one side of the page**. The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on **one side of the page**. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keyboarded responses together, in that same order.
6. The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
7. The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by **November 27, 2000**, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name <u>Senior Projects/ Senior</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	_____	<u>Alternate Assessment Program</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Middle School	_____	Number of Schools with Practice <u>2</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Junior High School	_____	Number of Districts with Practice <u>1</u>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High School	<u>9-12</u>	Location <input type="checkbox"/> Urban/City <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban With Urban Characteristics
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	_____	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Small City/Town <input type="checkbox"/> Rural

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages
	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement (family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
2. List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards,** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

*The 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.
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1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.

In an effort to promote project-based experiences at the 12th grade level, our school has designed a program entitled Senior Projects, which is available to fourth marking period seniors. The objective of the program is to provide students with the opportunity to extend their thinking beyond the classroom by immersing themselves in an area of personal interest, an interdisciplinary project, a career exploration inquiry (internship) or a community service project.

Students are encouraged to explore a project of their own creation with the guidance of a faculty mentor. Integral to the success of the Senior Projects Program is the role of the mentor student relationship. The goals of the program are for students 1) to take ownership of their own learning through real life experiences outside of school 2) to achieve a sense of satisfaction from a self designed learning experience with a caring mentor as an advisor 3) to exercise creativity and intellectual growth by learning a skill to solve a problem or by developing a talent 4) to culminate the high school experience with the realization that true learning is self motivated 5) to keep students engaged in meaningful learning experiences until the end of their senior year.

Students participating in the program have repeatedly stated that the Senior Projects Program was “the best learning experience” of their high school career. Mentors have concurred saying, “it is one of the best things that we do at our school.” The program has been in place for five years in one of the district’s high schools and is now in its third year at the other high school. This innovative program has captured the imagination of students as well as faculty members. The excitement has spread and some students begin planning their Senior Project well before their senior year!

2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.

The Senior Projects Program addresses all aspects of the Core Curriculum Content Standards and the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards. Because the program is directed at all students who are meeting graduation requirements, students involved in the program include the AP academically gifted, the college-bound student, the career-bound student and those with learning disabilities. Each student challenges himself to achieve at nothing less than 100% of his ability. The mentor is instrumental in keeping the student on course and acts as a friend or coach in the process.

Students choosing work related projects must learn self-management skills, the use of resources and technology and how to develop interpersonal skills. Last year a student exploring a career in accounting worked at Sony and found herself part of a team where workplace competencies were required. Another student shadowed a heart surgeon at Montefiore Hospital. Her research of heart disease was brought to the experiential level as she went through a pre-op examination of a patient about to have open heart surgery, attended the actual operation of the patient and was involved in the post-op follow-up and consultation with the patient. Another student explored the correlation between math and music (an interdisciplinary project which involved surveys, analysis and mathematical interpretation of the results). Other students choose projects involving the visual and performing arts. One student wrote and performed in her own

one act play which she directed, produced and presented before an audience of students, teachers and administrators. She enlisted twenty-five friends and one faculty member to act in her play and all memorized their lines.

Due to the variety of projects, different Core-Curriculum Standards are met, depending upon the chosen project. Those students involved in a career exploration project develop workplace readiness skills. Students exploring more creative projects fall into the Core Curriculum Standards for Language Arts/Literacy and the Visual and Performing Arts. "Curricula must contain challenging ideas and tasks applied to real-life, problem-solving activities that stimulate reasoning, foster creativity and an integration of knowledge, and develop evaluative, decision-making skills." (May 1996 New Jersey State Department of Education Core Curriculum Content Standards). The Senior Projects Program addresses the needs and interests of the students and challenges them to reach their maximum potential. The program addresses the precepts and expectations of the May 1996 State Department document in all aspects and offers the opportunity for 12th grade students to culminate their high school experience with the ultimate learning experience.

3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.

The Senior Projects Program addresses the need for the students to set their own objectives, to follow through on the goals that they have set for themselves and to master the skill of time-management in achieving the end result. Students in the program use critical thinking and problem solving skills. They are active learners in a project that becomes a passion for them. Although students are required to spend a minimum of fifty hours on the project, many report spending one hundred hours or more to accomplish their goal. Students participating in the Senior Projects Program are released from their 4th quarter English class and their final exam in English. Successful completion of the project secures the fourth marking period grade and the final exam grade in English.

Specific guidelines are set up for the achievement of goals. Rubrics are used by the mentor and the Senior Projects Committee to evaluate program participants. The mentor's "input grade" accounts for 50% of the final assessment grade. The mentor's grade is based upon the student's 1) preparedness at weekly meetings 2) meeting time-line standards 3) journal entries (all project experiences must be documented and reflected upon on a daily basis) and 4) the keeping of a time-log. The mentor also sends two progress reports to the Senior Projects Committee during the 2nd and 4th week of the project. Any student not progressing is sent back to English class and is required to make up any work missed. This has never happened but provisions are in place should a student change his/her mind mid-stream.

The second part of the assessment process is the grade assigned by the Senior Projects Evaluation Committee using a specific rubric for the required research paper, the project and the final oral presentation to the committee. Students are required to submit a research-based paper relating to the project. The paper is read and evaluated by 3-4 teacher evaluators. The students are required to make a 30-40 minute oral presentation about the project to the same evaluators who read their research paper. This presentation is not only explanatory in nature but also analytical. The student presentation may include a technology-based presentation, a physical product of the project, data obtained in the form of charts, photographs, etc. Students are

expected to explain what they learned from the process and then analyze the learning process that they have experienced. Questions from the evaluators are designed to make students analyze and evaluate their own learning experience. The committee's "output grade" accounts for 50% of the final grade and is combined with the mentor's grade for the final Senior Project grade. Students are required to complete an Exit Survey at the completion of the entire process. A Senior Projects Coordinator oversees the entire procedure and keeps in constant contact with the mentors, students and evaluators to assure the success of the program.

At the completion of the Senior Projects Program during the 1999-2000 school year, 95% of student participants at one of the participating high schools received a grade of "A" while 90% of students at the other district high school received an "A".

4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

The Senior Projects Program is currently in its 5th year in our district. Last year 37 students participated in the two high schools. Through workshops, the program has been well developed and refined with specific guidelines and procedures. The Senior Projects Committee has put together a package giving parameters and explaining in detail the Senior Project Program. This package would allow another school/district to easily replicate the program. Furthermore, the program coordinators would be willing to meet with anyone wishing to establish a Senior Projects Program in his school/district.

A committee of teachers committed to project based learning is key to the success of the program. Two to three workshops are provided for volunteer mentors and one workshop is provided for evaluators. These workshops are provided by the Senior Projects Coordinator or by outside specialists who have an expertise in mentoring and alternate assessment. More than 50% of the faculty members at one of the participating high schools were involved in some aspect of the Senior Projects Program during the 1999-2000 school year. The involvement and commitment of the faculty, the building principals, the superintendent of schools and the Board of Education are critical to the success of the Senior Projects Program.